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ABSTRACT

The state of undergraduate general education is examined with particular emphasis on the trend toward providing a common core curriculum for college students. A decline in the number of degrees awarded in the traditional liberal arts fields is noted with a corresponding increase in recent years in the number of degrees awarded in occupationally-oriented fields. According to the Carnegie Council, from 1969 to 1976 enrollments in humanities majors dropped from 9 to 5 percent of all undergraduates. It is suggested that the preoccupation of college graduates with preparing for the job market has steered students toward career-oriented majors. The dominance of departments within the structure of American colleges and universities is also cited as having hindered the struggle of general education. Students majoring in professional, career-oriented fields are the least likely to confront breadth or general education requirements. Various approaches to general education are discussed including the core curriculum and interdisciplinary approach. Each approach emphasizes the importance of basic skills for both the liberal arts and professional-area majors. Declining SAT scores and complaints that many college graduates cannot write are strong underlying forces for curriculum reform. It is suggested that students in the 1980's will have less latitude in curriculum choices as the general education reform movement strengthens. (SF)

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The Search for General Education

The Pendulum Swings Back

"Today's college graduate may have gained technical or professional training in one field of work or another, but is only incidentally, if at all, made ready for performing his duties as a man, a parent, and a citizen. Too often he is 'educated' in that he has acquired competence in some particular occupation, yet falls short of that human wholeness and civic conscience which the cooperative activities of citizenship require ....

"The crucial task of higher education today, therefore, is to provide a unified general education for American youth. Colleges must find the right relationship between specialized training on the one hand, aiming at a thousand different careers, and the transmission of a common cultural heritage toward a common citizenship on the other."[1]

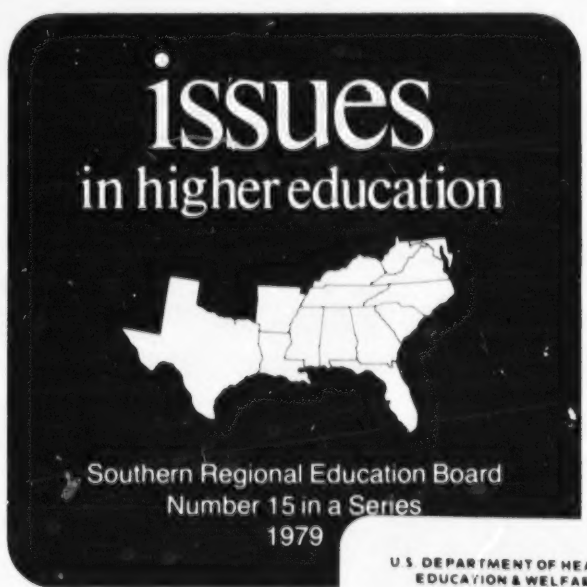
This appraisal of the state of undergraduate general education might well have been written today rather than in 1947 by President Truman's Commission on Higher Education.

In the 1940s, when the Truman Commission and institutions like Harvard sought to define the needed balance between general education and specialized, vocationally oriented preparation, the context of appraisal was the postwar explosion of college enrollments. With a college education no longer the exclusive prerogative of the elite, there was a search for curriculum structure that would provide a common experience for students from various backgrounds, or "general education as training in what unites, rather than in what divides, modern man."[2] The stress was on contemporary culture as an extension of the intellectual forces that shaped the Western mind and of the inherited views of man and society. The view was that to support a functioning democracy, the study of this heritage should not be an exclusive domain for the elite, but rather a binding denominator to strengthen the common ground on which society depends.

Today, a generation later, democratization in terms of numbers of college students and the variety of their backgrounds has been largely attained, but the ambitious goal of providing a common tie through general education may be more elusive than ever. As the percentage of the population attending college has increased, students have turned more and more to specialized and vocational curriculums, while the general education component that was supposed to be the uniting factor has correspondingly been weakened. Ironically, the "new students"—whose entrance into college in the 1940s and 1950s prompted the reexamination of and emphasis on general education—have their contemporary counterparts who eschew general education in favor of career-oriented courses.

Higher education, having accommodated to the task in the 1960s and 1970s of dealing with quantity, is today again addressing the issue of quality. Many institutions are reexamining their curriculums and giving special emphasis to a redefinition of general education. SREB, in the 1976 position paper, *Priorities for Postsecondary Education in the South*, called for renewed attention on balance of academic disciplines versus career preparation. Harvard University, the leader of higher education in the minds of many, exemplifies how the pendulum swings: a common core curriculum, which in many respects echoes an educational approach enunciated by Harvard in 1945, is being instituted this fall.

The reexamination of general education today seems to stem more from a realization that undergraduate general education has become too unstructured, is dealing with students unprepared in the basic skills, and is lacking in central purpose than because of a fundamental rediscovery of the values of teaching the cultural heritage. In the words of a task force at Catonsville Community College in Maryland, as it embarks on a redefinition of general education at that institution, "Our general education requirements do not constitute a



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program, there is no planned unity or cohesiveness in them . . . and positive student outcomes are not a consequence of a designed, integrated set of experiences."

In the words of President Derek Bok, as he discussed the need for general education reform at even so prestigious an institution as his own Harvard University, "We still have many students who come to us with an excellent high school preparation. But there are many other equally talented young people whose preparation leaves much to be desired. As a result, it seemed particularly important to provide a common core curriculum to ensure all our students would acquire a basic foundation in the liberal arts."[3]

The Decline of the General Education Component

The curriculum in most colleges is divided into three parts: general education, the student's major, and elective courses. General education refers to the *breadth* component, which seeks to provide a common undergraduate experience for all students at a particular institution. Some emphasis on *advanced learning skills*, e.g., English composition and second-year algebra, traditionally has been included in the general education requirements.

Two trends in recent years have weakened the breadth component of the college curriculum: (a) fewer students choose liberal arts majors, and (b) all students, whether enrolled in humanities or in occupationally oriented majors, include less general education in their curriculum—less exposure to disciplines other than their own majors.

Historical comparison of the distribution of baccalaureate degrees by fields of study in the South illustrates the decline of the liberal arts (see Table 1). With the percentage of the region's baccalaureates in any given field in 1963-64 taken as an index of 100, the distribution in 1976-77 shows marked declines for letters (55) and foreign languages (58). "Letters" includes English, literature, and philosophy, among others—the heart of the humanities. The index for mathematics, even when combined with computer sciences, would be only 50. Social sciences are down to 84, and would have declined further if economics were not included.

By contrast occupationally oriented fields, such as public affairs, business administration, the health professions, architecture, and communications (journalism), have increased their shares of total degrees dramatically. Engineering and education are outstanding exceptions to this trend. The job market explains the drop for education. In engineering, while the percentage share of degrees continues to decline, at least the absolute number of degrees has risen during the 1970s—while those in the traditional liberal arts have nose-dived.

[3] The Carnegie Council reports that, nationally, from 1969 to 1976 enrollments in humanities majors dropped from 9 to 5 percent of all undergraduates, and in social sciences from 18 to 8 percent.[4] During the same time enrollments in the "professions" (e.g., social work, business administration, architecture, agriculture, etc.) jumped from 38 percent to 58 percent (see Figure 1).

Table I

Percent Distribution of Baccalaureate Degrees By Major Fields of Study, SREB Region, 1963-64 — 1976-77

	1963-64*	1976-77	Index 1976-77 (1963-64 = 100)
Agriculture	1.7%	2.4%	141
Architecture and Design	.1	1.1	1100
Biological Sciences	4.7	5.3	113
Business and Management	13.8	18.8	136
Communications	.6	2.5	417
Computer and Information Sciences	—	.7	—
Education	26.4	19.5	74
Engineering	11.0	4.9	45
Fine and Applied Arts	1.8	3.5	194
Foreign Languages	1.9	1.1	58
Health Professions	2.2	6.3	286
Home Economics	1.1	1.9	173
Letters	8.4	4.6	55
Library Science	.2	.1	50
Mathematics	4.4	1.5	34
Physical Sciences	3.4	2.4	71
Psychology	2.2	4.4	200
Public Affairs and Services	.2	3.6	1800
Social Sciences	13.6	11.5	84
Other	2.3	3.9	170
Totals	100.0%	100.0%	

*1963-64 Degrees have been adjusted to fit the HEGIS nomenclature of 1970.

Sources: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Earned Degrees Conferred, 1963-64*, and SREB, *Degrees Awarded in the Nation and the South, 1976-77*.

The switch by students to career-oriented majors in higher education might not necessarily be a source of concern if the general education content of the total curriculum, i.e., the breadth component of higher education, had not also declined. For four-year institutions, general education requirements in 1967 comprised 43 percent of the undergraduate curriculum. By 1974 they had been reduced to 33.5 percent, in favor of electives.[5] The proportion of the requirements in the student's major stayed fairly constant (see Table 2). Indeed, the general education component lost ground throughout higher education—in public and private and in comprehensive and liberal arts institutions.

Avoidance of Prescribed Courses

Two simultaneous trends further eroded the curriculum's breadth requirement. First, the proportion of prescribed general education courses declined, thereby providing more latitude to students who want to avoid certain subjects out of

fear or lack of interest. For example, according to research by the Carnegie Council, 33 percent of the institutions had a mathematics requirement as part of general education in 1967; only 20 percent prescribed mathematics by 1974.[6]

Secondly, students have tended more and more to choose electives that relate to their majors (thus compounding the problem of over-specialization), rather than distributing their electives in subjects across the breadth of the total curriculum. A sample study of 1,794 student transcripts in 10 four-year institutions revealed that from 1967 to 1974 students had significantly altered the character of their electives toward their own areas of specialization.[7] Rather than selecting from the entire curricular spectrum, they took more courses in their own departments or divisions. Even when institutions increased the overall elective component of the total curriculum, students tended to use their greater freedom to concentrate even more completely on their majors.

The Carnegie Council in 1977 labeled general education a "disaster area [which] has been on the defensive and losing ground for more than 100 years."[8] Various factors contributed to this "disaster" in recent years. Since the late 1960s, the job market has become saturated by the postwar baby boom emerging from college. Students have been extremely concerned about preparing themselves for employment. To prepare for a job has become a more important reason for attending college than to obtain a well-rounded general education. From a compilation of follow-up surveys conducted by several institutions in the Southern region, it was found that 45 percent of the graduates indicated employment was their primary objective for attending college, while only 28 percent chose the option, "enhancing my intellectual and social development."[9] Similar results were found in a national student survey.[10]

The preoccupation of college graduates with the problem of landing a job steers them toward taking a course on marketing techniques rather than the philosophy of democracy as debated by the ancient Greeks. The higher education establishment has contributed to careerism in promoting the general impression, "Come to college and get a good job." In this atmosphere, it is no wonder that students opt out of courses with no immediate resemblance to the "real world."

The dilution of general education requirements was also a response to students' protests in the 1960s as they reacted against prescription and authority. Today, the climate may be more amenable to acceptance of a core curriculum. While in 1969 over half of all undergraduates indicated that they preferred a totally elective program to the traditional curriculum, by 1975 only one-third held out for "total freedom."[11]

Competition for admittance to graduate and professional schools has also steered undergraduates toward greater concentration in their majors. Despite avowals by medical schools that they seek students with a broad background, pre-med students concentrate on the sciences, in the hope this will improve their admission test scores and their chances for admission.

The dominance of departments within the structure of American colleges and universities has been blamed for the decline of general education. By virtue of the specialized training of most faculty, the status and aggrandizement of their own disciplines take precedence over concern for breadth in the education of students. General education has no natural lobby among faculty.

Professional schools have even greater autonomy than departments, and are thus in an even stronger position to require concentration. According to one recent study, professional schools "expect their students to spend a substantial part of their undergraduate education in the professional major—the median amount is between 61 to 70 percent of all courses that must be taken to get a bachelor's or associate degree."[12]

Table 2

Proportions of Undergraduate Education Spent in General Education, the Major, and Electives

	1967	1974
Four-year institutions		
General education requirements (mean)	43.1%	33.5%
Major requirements (range)	26.7-40.1	25.2-41.0
Available electives (range)	16.8-30.2	25.5-41.3
Two-year institutions		
General education requirements (mean)	58.7	53.8
Available electives	41.3	46.2

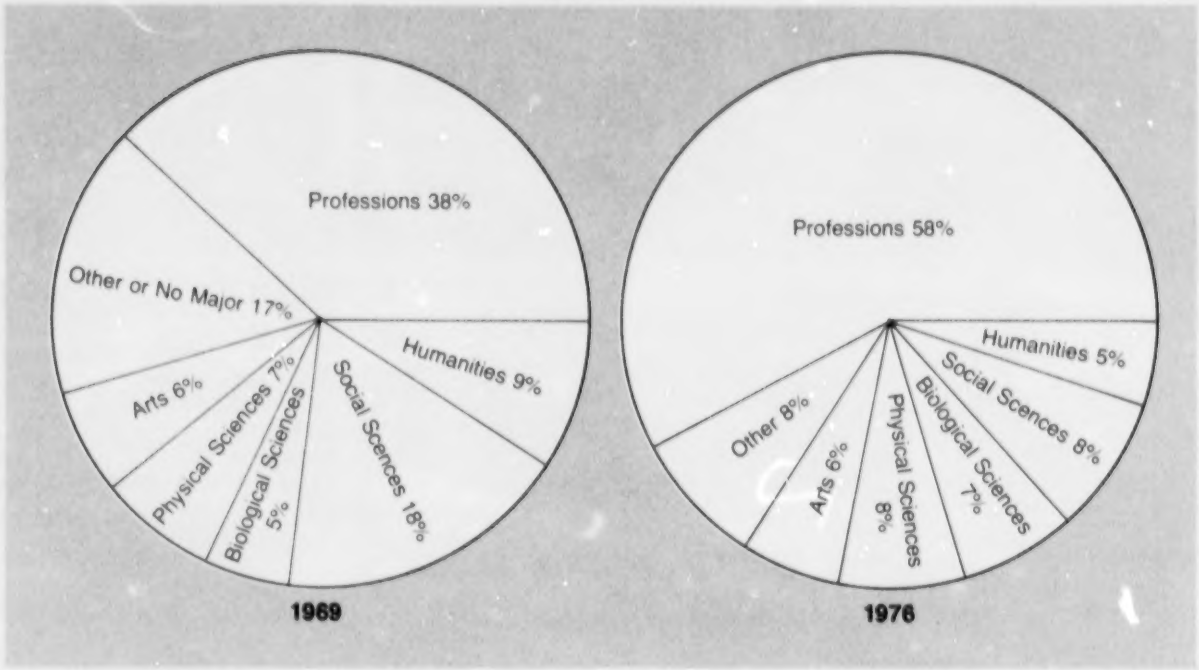
Even in an institution like Loyola University in New Orleans, with its award-winning arts and science common curriculum, the students in business administration are not required to take this same general curriculum. In the lower division, in which arts and science students must take a "hard science," business administration students take behavioral science and computer science. In the upper division, arts and science students must complete eight courses in three study areas: aesthetic, decisional, and speculative studies. No such requirement exists for business administration majors. This distinction is illustrative of the struggle of general education: students in traditional arts and science majors, which tend to accentuate liberal arts anyway, are more likely to confront breadth requirements than students majoring in the professional, career-oriented fields.

The Search for Solution

Although the allegiance of faculty to their departments has contributed to curriculum concentration, faculty are not universally pleased with the results. In a national survey in 1975, 44 percent of American faculty indicated that the undergraduate curriculum at their institution was in *serious* need of reform.[13] There is some evidence today that these concerns are being translated into positive action. Yet there is more agreement that all is not well than on the cure. It is simpler to specify, as stated by the University of Kentucky Commission on the Freshman Year, that freshmen "should increase both

Figure 1

Percentages of Undergraduate Enrollments in Subject Fields 1969 and 1976



the breadth and depth of their knowledge in major areas of intellectual endeavor," than to spell out specifics.[14]

One difficulty encountered in curriculum reform to strengthen general education is the disagreement over basic directions. Approaches on dealing with the content of general education range all the way from a required reading of the "Great Books," at St. John's College, to emphasis on developing a set of competencies, including the basics in writing and speaking, at Mars Hill College.

The controversy about the content of general education centers on the question of what subject matter is so important (either in its substantive content or in the skill it transmits) that it must be included in a common core curriculum for all students, regardless of their majors. Those who subscribe to the idea that despite the explosion of knowledge there is still a basic foundation of ideas or principles to which everyone should be exposed, point to the curriculum at St. John's College. There, during the course of four years, students read works by some 100 authors, ranging from Homer to Einstein and from Plato to Freud.

If exposure to the nub of various disciplines across the horizon of knowledge and literature is deemed essential to general education, the problem remains one of how to provide it. Survey courses, or overviews of broad academic areas—humanities, social sciences, natural science—represent one approach which has been widely used in structuring a core curriculum. Columbia University's Contemporary Civilization course, and the University of Chicago's General Course in the Study of Contemporary Society, are widely known examples of this effort. The renown of these particular courses may be partly a reflection of their having been staffed by senior scholars, a happy circumstance not always attainable within traditional departmental structures.

The distribution of required courses among the introductory offerings in various disciplines constitutes the most common approach to covering the content of general education. This too presents problems. Often such introductory courses are designed for majors in the discipline and become too technical for students who take the course to survey the entire field. Offering parallel introductory courses—one a survey of the discipline for non-majors, and another as a more concentrated introduction for majors—represents one direction for alleviating this problem.

The problem of implementing a core curriculum is illustrated by the experience of the University System of Georgia. The need to facilitate the transfer of credits for students from junior colleges to senior divisions served as an impetus for the development of a core curriculum that has been in effect since 1967. For students in all the colleges, statewide, the requirement calls for a certain number of credits across the humanities, mathematics and natural science, and social science. However, the latitude provided to different colleges in how these requirements are to be met appears to be so great that a common knowledge base is not attained by all students. For example, the mathematics requirement at the University of Georgia may be met in the School of Social Work by a

course in elementary statistics, and by a course in philosophy—introduction to deductive logic—for art education majors.

To identify a given set of facts, principles, or writings and to declare that these constitute the irreducible minimum of a broad education is not the goal of general education. In modern times, a common core education must represent a distillation of essentials, but designing and organizing this minimal foundation becomes an ever more arduous task.

What the searching student might well aspire to is exposure to the various *methods of inquiry* that distinguish disciplines. In the humanities, the student learns to explore the realm of ideals and values. In the sciences, the student focuses on description, measurement, and laboratory testing. The social sciences may combine both approaches as, with an historical event, the student acquires facts but proceeds also to analyze their function toward progress or retrogression against a given standard. A student acquainted with various analytical styles through his general education curriculum should be better prepared to pursue his own continuing self-education—the ultimate goal of a liberal education.

A particularly controversial matter in designing general education has to do with the place of ethics and moral values in the curriculum. There was a time when molding character was of the same importance in American colleges as developing the intellect. Even as late as 1911, the German sociologist, Max Weber, described American college education as one "which does not aim primarily at training for science and scholarship, but rather at the formation of character . . . , at the formation of adult citizens, and at the development of an outlook which serves as the foundation of the American governmental and social systems."

Today's approach to the inclusion of ethics and values, except in some private institutions, is more likely to accent differences between facts and values than to produce students with a shared code. There is a reluctance to stress values overtly, despite a recognition that a liberal education should address fundamental moral choices.

Problem-oriented courses are one curricular response to the problem of how to incorporate values in the general education program. For example, in a course on ecological matters, the values of maintaining an unpolluted environment are explicitly contrasted against the values of meeting energy needs. Through the explicit juxtaposition of conflicting values, students may move toward better understanding of opposing views and even the resolution of issues.

The Interdisciplinary Approach

The most successful approaches to general education have emphasized an interdisciplinary focus. Most typically this has taken the form of broad surveys. More recently, history, art, literature, and even science have been presented within the context of an historical period or a current issue. The dynamic interaction of economics, philosophy, and art may thus become apparent, giving more meaning to each subject than if studied in a vacuum.

Such interdisciplinary approaches are a reaction to the kind of atomistic education which leaves the student exposed to a smattering of various disciplines without ever being able to "make connections." Interdisciplinary general education is not just an ideal to produce a sophisticated individual who can enjoy "the good life." In one sense it constitutes the ultimate preparation for work. Business and government are crying for synthesizers who can walk interdisciplinary bridges to solve problems.

In this sense, if liberal arts colleges succeed in their mission of preparing students who see and apply connections between fields, their graduates should be the most sought after instead of the last to be recruited.

One difficulty in developing interdisciplinary general education is the inability of faculty to respond. The most glorious interdisciplinary plans may falter when applied by faculty who were nurtured in the dogma of narrow specialization and whose allegiance is to their departments or disciplines. The New College Program of the University of Alabama, which leans heavily on interdisciplinary seminars, sought to overcome this problem by staffing the New College with faculty who are well acquainted with more than one discipline and with experience in this type of teaching.

The struggle for acceptance of interdisciplinary courses is illustrated by the experience at North Texas State University. An objective of the new core curriculum was the promotion of interdisciplinary courses—in particular, one in the humanities which, however, is not mandatory. This approach will have to overcome the inertia produced by students who continue to choose the path of least resistance—traditional courses, with a reputation for being easy—and by faculty, for whom the development of new interdisciplinary material is a long and tortuous process.

At Birmingham-Southern College a new interdisciplinary approach offers a block of four carefully articulated courses on Contemporary Western Man, which avoids "the pedagogical and economic problems arising from conventional team teaching." This is one of the projects funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities in its program to strengthen education in the humanities.

Another problem relating to interdisciplinary, as well as to other approaches for giving breadth to the curriculum, concerns the timing of general education courses. Appreciation for seeing the connections between subjects is largely a function of maturity. Thus, the breadth component might have more meaning at upper than lower division levels. Yet most curriculum sequences fill the upper division with courses in the major, on the assumption that the breadth requirements were met earlier.

Current Directions of Reform

Headlines about curriculum reform tend to focus on Harvard University's current reestablishment of a common core. Harvard rejects a loose distribution requirement among departmental courses, as well as an identical set of courses that each student must complete. Instead, it establishes five required broad common core areas with criteria or characteristics that courses in these areas must meet. The Committee on the Core Curriculum identifies existing or proposed courses that meet the criteria in each area and may be selected for meeting the respective core requirements. The five areas are literature and the arts, historical study, social analysis and

moral reasoning, science, and foreign cultures. In addition to completing common core selections in the five areas, Harvard students will have to show proficiency in expository writing and in mathematics.

The general education reform movement is stirring on many campuses, including some in the Southern region. At William and Mary, a faculty committee recommends that more specificity be given to the current distribution requirements. Instead of the current latitude to choose within three broad areas, students would be required to complete courses in five more narrowly defined areas—unless they can "test out."

A Return to Specificity

A similar quest for more specificity is part of the current process of redefining general education at the University of Alabama. There the recommendations of an official core curriculum committee would reemphasize basic foundations, with the possibility of reintroducing some type of language requirement.

Xavier University of Louisiana also is reducing latitude for student choice, instead of permitting students to choose courses in four broad areas, as formerly, 12 specific subjects will be required, including a foreign language. Thus, students will no longer be allowed to avoid mathematics, history, or the natural sciences, as has been the case in the past.

Florida A&M University, with the assistance of a General Education Models grant,[15] is embarking this fall on more stringent, campus-wide general education requirements. As part of this sequence, all students, regardless of majors, will complete 15 credit hours in "communications," versus only nine previously. The sequence will focus on writing, reading, listening, and oral communication. The general education requirements will reduce the latitude for electives and major courses during the first two years. A firm general education foundation is to be established before students "test out" to the upper division courses.

The Emphasis on Basic Skills

The return to basics is the motivation for reform of general education in much of higher education today. Declining verbal and mathematics SAT scores of entering freshmen, as well as widespread complaints that many college graduates cannot write a coherent paragraph, are a strong underlying

Exposing Liberal Arts Majors to Applied Curricula

While general education enthusiasts seek to strengthen the humanities content for business administration and other professional area majors, there is at the same time a movement to expose liberal arts majors to practical courses. The impetus for this curriculum change is the poor job market for graduates in the humanities and social sciences. The College Placement Council reported in the spring of 1979 that while job offers for technical graduates (engineering, business, and scientific fields) were the best in 19 years, those for humanities and social science graduates declined 14 percent from the previous year.

Supply and demand comparisons for college graduates in the Southern region in 1985 indicate that there will be half as many graduates with business administration degrees as the number of job openings for which such preparation is indicated. When openings in sales occupations are included, the imbalance is even greater (see Figure 2).

This does not mean that jobs in these occupations will go unfilled, but rather that they will be filled by graduates with other majors. Many history, English, and other liberal arts majors have found employment in past years as administrators, sales managers, or personnel workers. This will continue, but the liberal arts major who has been exposed to some business courses will have a competitive advantage.

If it makes sense that a business major should have an exposure to the principles of moral reasoning which underly society's choices, it makes equally good sense that a liberal arts major have an understanding of the structure of the economy which provides him with a job; even an ability to understand a financial report or a governmental budget is not too much to expect of an informed citizen today. These matters are as relevant as the exploration of cultural values to the functioning of a well-rounded person in modern society.

Many traditional liberal arts colleges have responded to this need. One objective of Project Quill grants by the Association of American Colleges is to integrate liberal learning with career and professional education. Furman University in South Carolina, a recent Quill recipient, has developed business and government internships for humanities faculty to heighten their awareness of career applications of their subject areas. The scope of the economics department has been widened in some institutions to include management and accounting. Another approach has been to encourage double majors, major–minors, or internships to improve marketability of the traditional liberal arts curriculum.

A serious hindrance to the process of exposing non-business majors to business and management courses is the increasing difficulty these students encounter in being admitted to such offerings. According to the director of the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, because of booming enrollments, business administration schools "may now pick and choose their students to an unprecedented degree as standards have tightened." If it comes down to a choice of admitting majors or non-majors to crowded introductory courses, the student who is drawing on the business field to round out his education in some other discipline will usually be the loser. Unfortunately, the shifts of faculty and other resources from shrinking departments to the burgeoning schools of business have not kept pace with changing demand by students.

Ironically, the students with the greatest motivation to branch out into disciplines removed from their majors are having the greatest difficulty in achieving this aim. An English major heeding the advice to become exposed to an introductory course in business may face a closed enrollment barrier. Yet the doors are wide open to the business major who so much as even considers an introductory course in English literature.

force for curriculum reform. Courses in "advanced learning skills," to provide proficiency in algebra and English composition, have long been a component of general education. Today such courses take on an added urgency, and are often being translated into *basic* rather than *advanced* skills. In the revitalization of general education today, these courses may have to take precedence over the more esoteric quest for the common threads of the cultural heritage. There may be many more campuses where the priority must begin with basic skills than with acquainting students with how Shakespeare dealt with the alienation of parents and children in *Romeo and Juliet*.

It is no wonder, therefore, that in some institutions reemphasis on general education is approached through the definition of competencies or explicit educational objectives to be met by a college education. For example, to this purpose the Tennessee Higher Education Commission in 1977 proposed a set of minimal skills, some of which admittedly might be expected to be in the purview of secondary education.[16] An example of skills and understandings which students should be expected to master in two areas is shown below:

Indispensable Skills—Mathematical

1. Calculation of simple and compound interest.
2. Use of elementary statistical data.
3. Translation of measures to and from the English and metric systems.
4. Construction of simple graphs and charts.
5. Use of simple algebraic formulae.

Basic Understandings—Citizenship

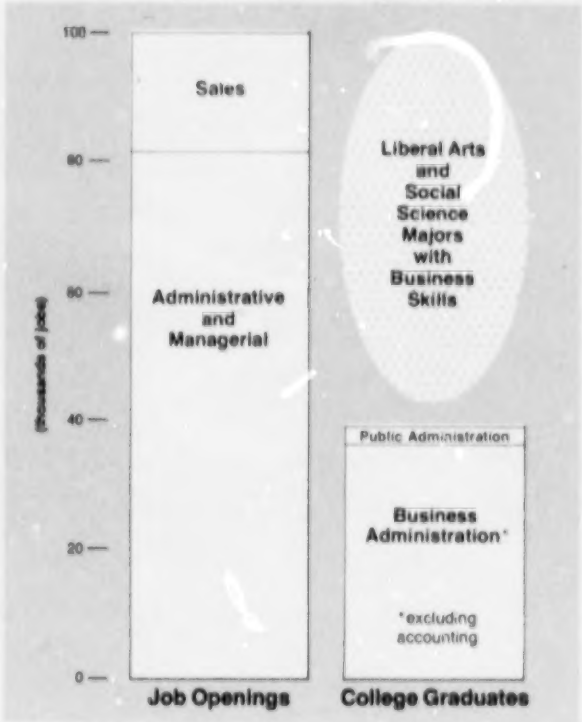
1. General functions of, and distinctions among, the judicial, legislative, and executive branches of local, state, and national government.
2. The recognized responsibilities and rights of citizens under the Constitution.
3. The various means of citizen involvement in the processes of government.
4. The growing interdependence of nations, especially regarding natural resources and economic development.

The movement to define general education in terms of demonstrated competencies depends to some extent upon the development of tests to measure whether the competencies have been achieved. Such tests also are used to exempt students from general education requirements. When the testing objective is to assess broad skills in a discipline rather than a mere recall of facts, the demands on the test designer are formidable. The American College Testing program is one of several groups designing tests to assess broad outcomes of general education. But measuring a person's "ability to understand the development of aesthetic awareness and theory from a number of perspectives" is no easy matter. The grading of subjective responses to distinguish between test takers' abilities rather than graders' predispositions is a difficult task, but progress has been reported on efforts to validate such questions.

It is only natural that the pluralistic higher education establishment, serving a tremendously diverse student body, should address the attempt at reconstruction of general education in different ways. Stricter enumeration of specific courses, interdisciplinary approaches, stress on modes of inquiry, and emphasis on basic skills are examples of the current variety of approaches to strengthen general education.

Figure 2

Who Will Fill The Gap In Managerial and Administrative Careers in the South?



Not since America's early days, when higher education was the exclusive domain of the elite, has the curriculum among diverse institutions produced a homogeneous product. Today, the student body represents more segments of society than ever before. It is no wonder then that efforts to strengthen general education in some institutions center on the cultural heritage and how best to transmit it, while in others it translates first to preoccupation with basic skills.

Regardless of the particular approaches to general education reform, the current focus on the content and *quality* aspects of higher education signals a constructive reaction to the respite from mere accommodation to growth. Whatever the directions of current general education reforms, it seems clear that students in the 1980s will have less latitude in curriculum choices, and that more of them will have to prove proficiency according to how their general education requirements are defined.

This edition of *Issues in Higher Education* was prepared by Eva C. Galambos, SREB research associate.

Footnotes

[1]*Higher Education for Democracy*, 1947, as extracted in Arthur Levine, *Handbook on Undergraduate Curriculum* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1978), pp. 617–618.

[2]Report of the Harvard Committee, *General Education in a Free Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955), p. 37.

[3]Derek Curtis Bok as quoted in "Harvard's New 'Core Curriculum' Called Major Educational Reform," *The Clarion Ledger Jackson Daily News*, Jackson, Miss., June 10, 1979, p. 4.

[4]Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, *Missions of the College Curriculum* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1977), p. 103.

[5]Robert Blackburn, et al., *Changing Practices in Undergraduate Education* (Berkeley, Calif.: Carnegie Council on Policy Studies, 1976), p. 11.

[6]*Ibid.*, p. 17. According to the Carnegie Council Catalog Study of 1976, 48 percent of all general education programs required a mathematics course. (Levine, *op. cit.*, p. 20).

[7]*Ibid.*, p. 29.

[8]Carnegie Foundation, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

[9]Southern Regional Education Board, Project on Comparisons of Outcome Data, in progress.

[10]Carnegie Foundation, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

[11]*Ibid.*, p. 202.

[12]*Ibid.*, p. 115.

[13]Levine, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

[14]*Report of the Joint Vice Presidential Commission on the Freshman Year*, University of Kentucky, July 1976, p. 29.

[15]The Project on General Education Models is sponsored by the Society for Values in Higher Education, and has established a consortium of institutions, each of which is undertaking a full-scale review of its general education programs.

[16]Tennessee Higher Education Commission, *The Competent College Student*, April 1977.

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